# elise and a bike

The night was young and crisp and The air in Misty Falls always felt heavy. It was a city built on shadows and strange quiet. Rain seemed to fall even when the sky was clear, leaving everything damp and cold. Elise gripped the handlebars of her old blue bicycle tightly. She was only 15, and the journey home from the pharmacy always felt too long. she stayed in a near by housing project that had recently been built. the pharmacy wasn't far from home, she was use to the dark windy trip down the block.

She had picked up medicine for her grandmother, a small bottle of shimmering blue liquid. The streets were mostly empty. Most people in Misty Falls stayed indoors after sunset due to strange occurrences that just kept increasing . The streetlights flickered, casting long, unsteady shadows that danced like nervous ghosts.

As Elise pedaled past the abandoned clock tower, she felt a prickle on her neck. She glanced behind her. A black cab was crawling slowly a block back. It was an old model, boxy and dull, its chrome rusting. She couldn't see the driver clearly, but something about the way the cab moved made her heart beat faster. It was too slow for the road, almost hovering.

Elise  sped up a little. She turned onto Willow Street, a narrow path lined with tall, silent apartment buildings. She checked her mirror again. The black cab followed. It kept the same distance, a silent, metal shadow. “nutjob, who is hiring these people” she thought before

plugging back in her headphones.

Curiosity, a dangerous thing in Misty Falls, started to mix with her fear. Why would a cab be driving so slowly behind a girl on a bike? There were no other cars. road rage was one thing but night buddy attackers were on the rise, they were as strange as they were dangerous , they often didn't remember anything after they kill you with their car and then the worst, sometimes the body just disappeared no clues nothing just one culprit with no memory. some of these people were recruited some would say and others seemed to just be possessed by some eerie force late in the night.

She decided to test it. Elise cut sharply down an alleyway. This alley was rarely used, filled with overflowing dumpsters and the smell of wet cement. She pushed the pedals harder, her thin legs pumping. The sound of her bike chain rattled loudly in the narrow space.

She reached the end of the alley and risked another look back. The black cab was already there, turning into the alley entrance with surprising speed for such an old vehicle. The headlights were dim, yellow eyes watching her.

Panic set in. Elara pumped her legs until her lungs burned. She swerved out onto Gray Street, a longer, more open road, hoping to outpace the strange vehicle. She pedaled furiously, her mind racing. She needed to get to Maple Avenue, the main street, where there might be other people.

The cab kept pace. It was close now, maybe only twenty feet behind her. her raced and she knew he had bad intentions, it was time to take the headphones out, sweaty and scared she carefully paced her self her eyes wide with realistic fear.  She could hear a low, almost humming sound coming from its engine, a sound that felt wrong, unnatural.

Finally, she saw the familiar lights of Maple Avenue ahead. It was the busiest part of their district, even late at night. She aimed for the center of the sidewalk, fast she bolted in the opposite direction, intending to ride directly toward the brightly lit bakery where Mr. Henry often worked late.

Just as Elise burst onto the main street, a blur of movement happened beside her. A short man, dressed in a thick, dark coat, was moving fast, weaving through the few pedestrians near the corner shop. He was moving much faster than a normal person should move.

The man did not look at Elara. He seemed focused only on the space immediately in front of her. With a sudden, powerful shove, the man impacted Elara’s side thrusting her far from the bike taking himself to the ground as well.

Elise cried out, losing all control. She tumbled hard onto the gritty pavement, “aaah” she screamed holding her knees,  the pharmacy bag flying open. The small bottle of blue medicine rolled under a nearby bench far from her line of sight.

She looked up instantly, expecting to see the man

standing over her, perhaps the cab driver emerging. But both were gone.

Instead, she stared in wide-eyed confusion at the spot where her bicycle had been.

The black cab was stopped directly where she fell, its doors shut tight. The driver’s window was rolled down a fraction. Elara could finally see the driver. His face was pale, almost white, and his eyes were too wide, too focused. He was staring not at Elara, but at the space where her bike had been just a second before. His expression was a strange mix of terror and intense satisfaction.

Then it happened.

Where the blue bicycle had rested against the curb, a violent shimmer started. It was like heat rising off asphalt on a summer day, but this was cold. The metal frame of the bike seemed to vibrate, then it began to darken, turning a deep, oily black. A thick plume of black, acrid smoke erupted from the bike, smelling faintly of ozone and burned metal.

Mr. Henry , the baker, rushed out of his shop door, drawn by the strange noise and smoke.

"What in the name of the falls is that?" Mr. Henry shouted, shielding his face from the dark cloud.

Elise scrambled backward on her hands and knees. The smoke thickened rapidly, swirling around the stationary black cab. It was not dissipating; it was contracting,

pulling the remnants of the bike inward.

In less than three seconds, the bike was gone. There was no twisted metal, no broken plastic, just a small patch of perfectly clean, dry pavement where the bike had been. The black smoke vanished as if sucked into a vacuum.

The humming noise from the cab stopped instantly.

The driver blinked slowly, looking down at his empty hands resting on the steering wheel. He took a deep, shuddering breath, then violently cranked the window shut. He slammed the car into gear, and the black cab shot forward, not smoothly, but with a violent lurch, disappearing around the corner onto a dark side street, leaving streaks of unnatural shadow behind it.

Elara sat frozen on the ground. Mr. Henry knelt beside her, his usual jolly face now tight with concern.

"Elise! Are you hurt? What happened to your bike?" he asked, looking wildly around the empty street.

Elara slowly pointed to the clean spot on the pavement. "It**... it went somewhere,"** she whispered, tasting the metallic fear in her mouth. "The cab driver, he looked... like he was watching it leave." ripe ,and clear as the kids piled onto the bus after the school dance. Laughter filled the